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UNCLAS SINGAPORE 003614

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR INL/HSTC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM KCRM ELAB KWMN PREL SN

SUBJECT: SINGAPORE MOVES CLOSER TO CHILD SEX TOURISM LAW

REF: A. SINGAPORE 3090

1B. SINGAPORE 1635

¶1. (U) Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports Vivian Balakrishnan condemned child sex tourism in November as "intolerable, and incompatible with being a Singaporean." Speaking at the Regional Conference on the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, Balakrishnan also told the press that the GOS will take tough action against those involved in child sex tourism, including amending laws to bring those caught committing these crimes abroad back home to face prosecution.

¶2. (SBU) Balakrishnan's statement sent the clearest signal yet that the GOS may enact an extraterritorial child sex tourism law. A PAP member of parliament privately confirmed to us that Balakrishnan's remarks were intended to preview the government's decision to pursue such a law. (The government is expected to announce its final decision in the next few weeks.) She noted, however, that the government still has questions about how it will effectively enforce the measure. The GOS had initially dismissed such a law as unenforceable in the region, given concern about relying on possibly incompetent or corrupt police in other jurisdictions. The public outcry over a case of a Singaporean man arrested in Bangkok for soliciting sex with children sparked an unusually heated Parliamentary debate earlier this year, however, and local NGOs have continued to rally support for the measure through various public events and an online petition (Refs A and B).

¶3. (SBU) Comment: Singaporeans are becoming increasingly active in their efforts to ensure that the Singapore government and society live up to their responsibilities as a developed, law-abiding, first-world country. Despite remaining doubts about the feasibility of an anti-child sex tourism law, the government's apparent intent to adopt one demonstrates that the government does listen and respond to public opinion.

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